

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 DHA-02 /072 W

-----080337 261233Z /43

R 260950Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8179

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 3663

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SF

SUBJECT: CO-FOUNDER LEAVES NEW REPUBLIC PARTY AFTER LOSING
INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLES

REF: A) PRETORIA 3397, B) CAPE TOWN 72

1. SUMMARY: THEO GERDENER, A CO-FOUNDER OF THE NEW REPUBLIC PARTY, RESIGNED HIS LEADERSHIP POST JULY 23 AFTER LOSING INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLES WITH NEWCOMMER JOHAN PRINS AND PARLIAMENTARY LEADER RADCLYFFE CADMAN. PRINS, AS A RESULT, HAS EMERGED A MAJOR FIGURE IN THE NRP AND HAS REVERSED HIS PREVIOUS PLAN TO BOLT THE PARTY. HE WILL BE THE NRP CANDIDATE IN AN UPCOMING PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTION THAT WILL BE CRUCIAL TO THE PARTY'S FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. THEO GERDENER, WHO LED HIS TINY DEMOCRATIC PARTY INTO UNION WITH THE UNITED PARTY (UP) TO FORM THE NEW PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION, THE NEW REPUBLIC PARTY (NRP), RESIGNED HIS LEADER-
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SHIP POST JULY 23. IN A LETTER TO INTERIM CHAIRMAN SIR DE VILLIERS GRAAFF, GERDENER SAID HE COULD NO LONGER SUPPORT THE THREE-WEEK OLD ALLIANCE BECAUSE IT WAS MAKING THE SAME MISTAKES THAT LED TO THE UP'S DEMISE AND LACKED THE FINANCES AND LEADERSHIP NECESSARY TO BULD AN EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION. GERDENER DENIED PRESS SPECULATION THAT HE HAD RESIGNED BECAUSE OF A POWER STRUGGLE WITH YOUNG AFRIKANER LEADER

DR. JOHAN PRINS OR BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN REBUFFED BY PARLIAMENTARY LEADER RADCLYFFE CADMAN WHEN HE REQUESTED THAT HE BE NAMED HEAD OF THE NRP INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY SECRETARIAT.

2. DURING A CONVERSATION JULY 21 WITH AN EMBOFF, PRINS INDICATED THAT GERDENER MIGHT RESIGN RATHER THAN BE SHUNTED ASIDE INTO A PARTY SINECURE. PRINS, WHO HAD THREATENED TO LEAD A PARTY BOLT IF HE WERE NOT GIVEN A POSITION ON THE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OR IF CADMAN WERE NAMED PARTY LEADER (REF A), SAID HE AND GRAAFF HAD HAD A SERIES OF NEGOTIATIONS ON THESE ISSUES. GRAAFF, FACED WITH A CHOICE BETWEEN PRINS, WHO COMMANDS THE SUPPORT OF THE PARTY'S YOUNG AFRIKANERS, AND GERDENER, WHO HAS NO SIGNIFICANT FOLLOWING INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE PARTY, SIDED WITH PRINS. PRINS SAID GRAAFF GAVE HIM GUARANTEES THAT HE (PRINS) AND HIS SUPPORTERS WOULD BE GIVEN EXECUTIVE POSITIONS IN THE PARTY AND THAT NO PERMANENT PARTY LEADER WOULD BE NAMED UNTIL NEXT YEAR. AS A RESULT PRINS WITHDREW HIS THREAT TO BOLT AND ACCEPTED THE NRP NOMINATION FOR THE UPCOMING PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTION IN JOHANNESBURG LATER THIS YEAR. GERDENER, WHO HAD BEEN ANGLING FOR THAT NOMINATION, LOST HIS POWER STRUGGLE AND RESIGNED A FEW DAYS LATER.

3. THE PRESS SPECULATED THAT PRINS' ONLY OPPOSITION IN WHAT WILL BE A CRUCIAL ELECTION WOULD COME FROM THE LIBERAL PROGRESSIVE-REFORM PARTY (PRP). THE PRP IS REPORTEDLY QUITE CONFIDENTIAL

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POPULAR IN THE DISTRICT. IF, AS IS EXPECTED, THE PRP NOMINATES JUDGE KOWIE MARAIS, AUTOR OF THE 14 POINTS DESIGNED TO CREATE A UNITED OPPOSITION (REF B), PRINS WILL START AT A DISADVANTAGE. PRINS SAID, HOWEVER, THAT THE INCUMBENT, NRP MEMBER, G.F. JACOBS, WILL VACATE THE SEAT ONLY WHEN PRINS FEELS THAT THE PARTY'S PROSPECTS HAVE IMPROVED. PRINS SPECULATED THAT THE ELECTION WOULD BE IN NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER, AND THAT A VICTORY WILL GIVE THE NRP SOME NEEDED MOMENTUM JUST BEFORE THE 1978 PARLIAMENTARY SESSION OPENS.

4. COMMENT: THE PRESS VIEWED GERDENER'S SURPRISE ANNOUNCEMENT AS A DEVASTATING BLOW TO THE PARTY. HOWEVER, SINCE GERDENER CARRIED LITTLE POLITICAL WEIGHT, HIS RESIGNATION WILL LIKELY NOT HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT. THE PARTY DECIDED THAT PRINS AND HIS YOUNG AFRIKANERS REPRESENT MORE POTENTIAL POWER AND INFLUENCE THAN GERDENER, AND IT SACRIFICED THE LATTER TO ASSURE THE ALLEGIANCE OF THE FORMER.

5. THE PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTION WILL BE CRUCIAL FOR THE FUTURE OF BOTH THE PRP AND NRP. IF THE NRP WINS, IT WILL INDICATE THAT PRESS PREDICTIONS OF ITS IMPENDING DEMISE ARE EXAGGERATED AND THAT ITS MODERATE, CENTRIST PLATFORM IS

VIALE AND HAS SOME POPULAR APPEAL. IF THE PRP WINS, IT WILL
GAIN FURTHER MOMENTUM FOR ITS CAMPAIGN TO BECOME THE PARLIA-
MENTARY OPPOSITION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY LEADERS, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PRETOR03663
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770266-0058
Format: TEL
From: PRETORIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770718/aaaaapim.tel
Line Count: 120
Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8ae40d64-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PRETORIA 3397, 77 CAPE TOWN 72
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1746117
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CO-FOUNDER LEAVES NEW REPUBLIC PARTY AFTER LOSING INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLES
TAGS: PINT, SF, (GERDENER, THEO), (PRINS, JOHAN), (CADMAN, RADCLYFFE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8ae40d64-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009